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# THE ROMANCE OF MARY WOLLSTONE-CRAFT SHELLEY, JOHN HOWARD PAYNE AND WASHINGTON IRVING

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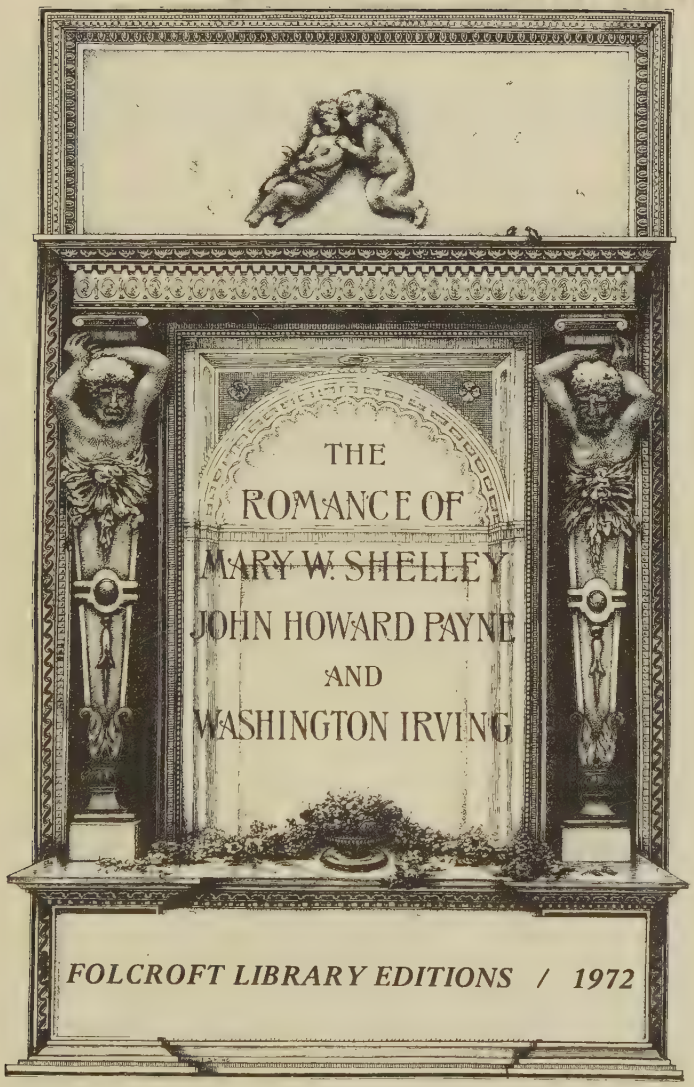
JOHN HOWARD PAYNE

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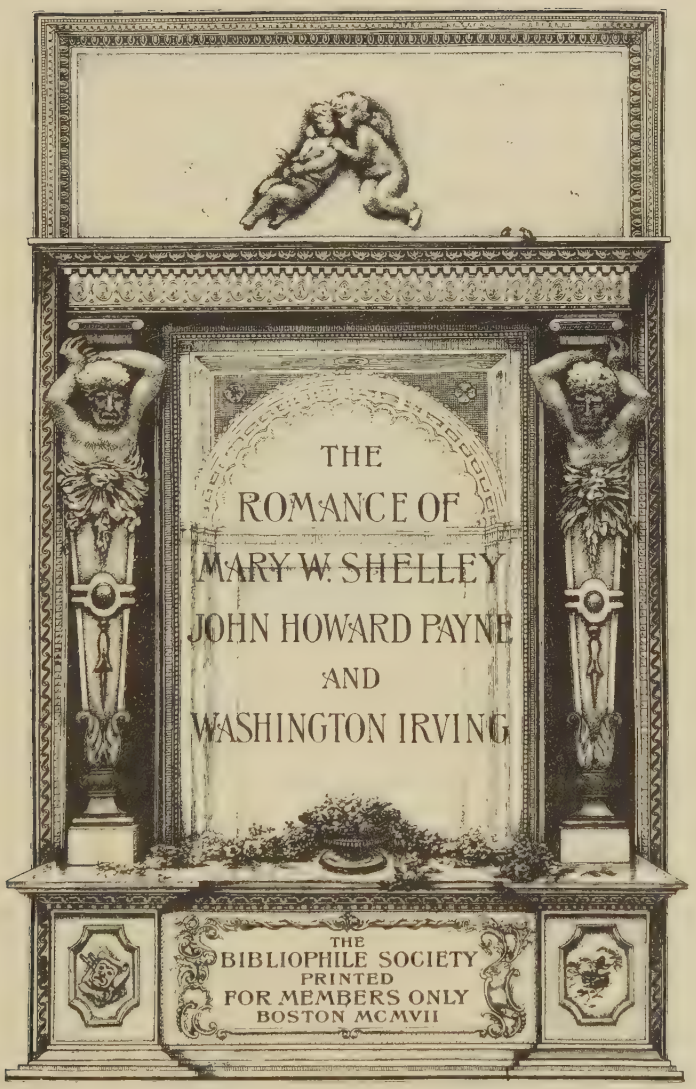
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## PREFATORY

THE prominence of the three principal parties concerned in the correspondence in this romantic episode makes it of general interest to the public; especially since it chiefly concerns the unrequited love of the author of that immortal song, *Home, Sweet Home*, who died forlorn and dejected, without ever having tasted the sweets of a home, which appeared to him only in poetic vision. The Fates appear to have decreed against him, and after his unsuccessful attempt at wooing the heart of Shelley's widow, and discovering that he had been used by her merely as a convenience and a factor in an attempt to establish a relationship with a third party—Washington Irving—he manfully submits to the situation, and actually endeavors to assist in the accomplishment of her purposes. In the latter

part of June, 1825, after discovering the nature of the rôle he was playing in her game of love, he wrote to her,—"Be assured I will act the hero in this business; and shall feel quite reconciled to the penalty to which my folly has condemned me, and which, I hope, I have firmness enough to make a light one, if my friendship should prove a stepping-stone to one in every way much more gratifying and desirable." After having lavished his unstinted devotion upon Mrs. Shelley, it must have cost him a bitter pang to write his friend Irving the letter which appears on page 17 of this volume, in which he discloses the fact that he (Irving) was the one that Mrs. Shelley was really in love with. To Irving he says: "It was some time before I discovered that I was only sought as a source of an introduction to you. . . . But at the same time you will admit that she is a woman of the highest and most amiable qualities, and one whose wish for friendship it would be doing yourself injustice not to meet. . . . No doubt it will cost you some reflection fully to appreciate the trouble I am taking to make you well acquainted with one whom I have known so well—to transfer an intimacy of which any one ought to be proud." In performing this act of painful chivalry he still cherished a distant hope, for in the same letter he

remarks to Irving,—"possibly you would have fallen in love with her had you met her casually, . . . but sentiments stronger than friendship seldom result from this sort of previous earnestness for intimacy when it comes from the wrong side." Irving had had his own disappointments in love, however, and there is nothing later to show that he accepted this proffered opportunity of becoming a worshipper at the hymeneal altar. It is altogether probable that he gallantly declined to take any part in the affair in rivalry with his friend, even if he had been otherwise so inclined. Payne afterwards returned to London, and continued for some years to supply Mrs. Shelley with theatre passes, but it is doubtful if his wounded pride ever permitted him to renew his avowals of affection for her.

The correspondence throughout is, generally speaking, self-explanatory, and there is but little need for editorial comment. The reader will be quite competent to draw the necessary deductions, and the correspondence is therefore printed in the same general order in which it was arranged by Payne himself at the time he sent the whole of it to Irving.

In the preparation of this work we have had the use of all the original holograph letters, from

which these printed copies are transcribed verbatim. The originals are in the collection of Mr. William K. Bixby, to whose kind generosity the members are indebted for the privilege of possessing this volume.

This important series of letters was preserved from destruction by W. P. Chandler, who succeeded Payne as United States Consul at Tunis, where Payne died. The first that the public ever knew of them was when they were recently catalogued and sold, when Mr. Bixby became the fortunate possessor of the entire lot.

H. H. H.

MRS. PERCY B. SHELLEY

# THE ROMANCE OF MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT SHELLEY, JOHN HOWARD PAYNE AND WASHINGTON IRVING

WITH REMARKS BY F. B. SANBORN

THE interesting love romance between Mrs. Shelley, the widow of the poet, and John Howard Payne, the far-famed author of *Home, Sweet Home*, —in which Washington Irving figures conspicuously,—forms a dramatic chapter heretofore unknown to the world.

Mrs. Shelley was the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin. Her birth, in 1797, caused the death of her gifted mother, and made her the special care of her thriftless but well befriended father. She inherited some of the traits of both parents: from her mother, a warm heart and quick sympathies; from her father, a singular willingness to accept favors from attached friends, while allowing them nothing in return except a rather disparaging estimate of their

characters. Both these conflicting tendencies are manifest in these letters of Mrs. Shelley, along with a certain caution and sensitiveness to the censures of Mrs. Grundy, that tutelary divinity of English social life, which must have been a legacy from Godwin's mother, that inimitable British matron, whose letters to her dear but heretical son are the delight of all readers of his biography.

At the beginning of this correspondence with John Howard Payne, late in 1824, Mrs. Shelley was not quite twenty-eight years old, while Payne was six years older, and one year older than Shelley would have been had he lived. Payne was an American, born in New York; he lived for a few years in Boston, and then became a resident of Easthampton on Long Island, where his cottage has but lately been destroyed to make room for a church. He began life early as a boy actor, and continued on the stage until 1817, when he changed to the kindred pursuit of a playwright, in which he was successfully engaged when his acquaintance with Mrs. Shelley began. This, it may be concluded from some casual remarks in one of her letters, was at Paris, in 1823, when she was on her way from Italy to London, and spent some days at the Hôtel Nelson, in Paris. At that time Payne, who had involved himself in

The Payne Cottage at East Hampton, Long Island

debt by an unsuccessful management of the Sadlers Wells theatre in London, was living in Paris to avoid arrest. There he was joined in 1823 by his friend Washington Irving (six years older than himself), who was already a successful author in England, and was the friend of Sir Walter Scott, Tom Moore, John Murray, the publisher, and other persons of importance in the literary world. Mrs. Shelley and her husband had never gained any considerable standing among the literary magnates of their period. Her father, William

Godwin, had, however, and it is interesting to see how men of letters in the different schools and parties—from Shelley, Coleridge, Lamb, and Wordsworth to Mackintosh and Scott—were ready to aid that impecunious but highly respected author of novels and political history and disquisition. Shelley was his principal benefactor in the pecuniary way, although Charles Lamb sent him £50 out of his small income on one occasion, and Lady Caroline Lamb solicited subscriptions for him from her titled friends, and professed herself his disciple and correspondent.

It is probable that in 1825 Mrs. Shelley saw in Irving a means of access to the world, from which she felt herself excluded by the hostility to Shelley and Byron; with the latter she was at one time closely associated, and unfavorably though unjustly connected in the English mind. That she ever contemplated marrying Irving is unlikely, although she allowed herself to jest on that subject in a letter written to Payne in July, 1825. It may be inferred from what Mrs. Shelley says, that she had met Irving briefly in Paris with Payne in the summer of 1823; but this is mere conjecture. Irving had joined his friend in July of that year, somewhat dispirited, and accepted a partnership with Payne in the work of adapting

French plays to the London theatres, with an equal share of the profits. Irving stipulated that his name should not be used in these plays. A few months later, while Payne was privately in London, Irving sent him *Charles II*, a piece in three acts, adapted by him, with a little help from Payne, from *La Jeunesse de Henri IV*, which proved to be a popular play, and still keeps the stage. It was produced at Covent Garden, May 27, 1824, and was witnessed by Irving at its second night, probably in company with Payne and Mrs. Shelley. But he soon returned to Paris,—where Carlyle failed to meet him in the autumn of that year. Early in 1826 Irving went to Spain. At what precise time Payne sent him the correspondence with Mrs. Shelley does not appear; but we have his letter transmitting it, written in Paris one Tuesday evening,—probably late in 1825:—

My dear Irving,—I have reflected a long time before I determined to show you this correspondence, because from its nature it might appear indelicate to expose the letters, especially to you, as you are more involved in it than you even appear to be. It was some time before I discovered that I was only sought as a source of an introduction to you—and I think you will, on reading the

papers, feel that I might have mistaken the nature of my acquaintance with the writer, without any gratuitous vanity. But at the same time you will admit that she is a woman of the highest and most amiable qualities, and one whose wish for friendship it would be doing yourself injustice not to meet. Of course, it must be a perfect secret between ourselves that I have shown the letters. They are at present not known to any one. You must not look upon the affair in a ridiculous light, as, if you should, I shall never forgive myself for having exposed so fine a mind to so injurious a construction.

I really wish you would see and know Mrs. S[helley] whenever you go to London. I am not in the least dissatisfied with the way in which she considers me, however difficult an affair so little flattering to one's pride and affections is to endure at first. But I felt from the beginning that I had been too deeply galled ever again to be let in among the herd—however much individuals might pity me at a distance.

No doubt it will cost you some reflection fully to appreciate the trouble I am taking to make you well acquainted with one whom I have known so well—to transfer an intimacy of which any one ought to be proud. I do not ask you to fall in

love—but I should even feel a little proud of myself if you thought the lady worthy of that distinction, and very possibly you would have fallen in love with her, had you met her casually—but she is too much out of society to enable you to do so—and sentiments stronger than friendship seldom result from this sort of previous earnestness for intimacy when it comes from the wrong side.

The letters were generally scribbled off on scraps of paper, as soon as those which prompted them came. These scraps I kept by me—accidently—or rather, most of them; when the communications grew a little serious, I kept them on purpose. I have been taught great distrust of my own impressions on such matters by experience, and hence felt the propriety of retaining all the materials for a future opinion. After I found which way the current ran, I copied all I could make out, fairly—that you might understand the matter thoroughly. I am a little proud of having acted, in the main, with so much consistency.

I have felt myself in honor bound to withhold nothing from you, and you must judge of what I now do, not from your own uninterested views of the subject, but from those by which I have been guided and the strong feelings I have sacrificed.

I think the rest will explain itself. It may help your understanding of the early part, to know there was some blunder made by Thomas Holcroft in a message, which for a long time stopped all correspondence with Mrs. S., who some months before had written to me frequently for orders.

Yours ever, J. H. P.

Thomas Holcroft was the son of Mrs. Kenney, *née* Mercier, who had been the fourth wife of Godwin's literary friend Holcroft, and who was then living in Paris with her two daughters, Louisa, afterwards Mrs. Badams (a friend of Carlyle, and also of Charles Lamb), and Fanny, a novelist in later years.* Mrs. Kenney, as well as her husband, was in England in 1824, and we therefore date this first note of Mrs. Shelley's in that year. Dating from "5 Bartholomew Place, Kentish Town, Thursday evening," she wrote to Payne as follows:—

My dear Sir,—You failed in bringing me Mrs. Kenney. Why doubly fail in not calling here yourself? It was not until to-day that I heard

*Payne, Holcroft, Godwin, Mrs. Kenney and Louisa Badams were all friends and correspondents of Charles Lamb.

that our friend was gone to Brighton, and I should have despaired of the possibility of inducing you to make this North Passage, had not the kind gods sent me a substitute in her place. Mrs. Harwood called on me to-day, and, expressing a great desire to find some opportunity of conversing with you concerning your American friend,* I thought that I might venture to say that I would ask you to meet her here, and fixed with her Sunday evening, *i. e.* at six P. M. Will you come, and over a cup of hyson drink to the better delivering of embassies, and that all messengers do not set amicable powers by the ears?

When do you expect Mrs. Kenney to return?

I am, dear Sir, your faithful servant,

MARY SHELLEY

This invitation Payne misread for Monday evening, as will appear. He accepted, however, and on Saturday morning thus disposed of Mrs. Kenney, who had rejoined her husband in Paris:—

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—Mrs. Kenney's departure was (like everything she does) very sudden. Her husband was seized with a paroxysm of *domesticity* (is there such a word?) and enjoined her on

*Washington Irving.

her allegiance to leave him a forlorn bachelor no longer. There was such commotion among the bandboxes, such scattering of coin of every denomination, so many calls to be made, and so many places to return to, where the essential half of an errand had been forgotten,—that I was afraid to mention Kentish Town. I did, however; but the lady of the peculiar robes declined. She said I only asked her as an excuse for myself. Till she refused, it never occurred to me that I had taken no notice of the number of your house or the name of the Row. It really seemed, till then, as if I could have found it by a sort of instinct, and it was only yesterday that Mr. Marshall gave me a less romantic but more satisfactory address; and I thank you for the opportunity with which your kind note favours me of profiting by our excellent friend's information. I am only sorry I shall be obliged to quit you early, as I have business in Town that evening.

Believe me, my dear Mrs. Shelley, most faithfully and respectfully yours, J. H. P.

But it seems that Sunday had been read Monday by Payne, who did not call on Mrs. Shelley till the night after the tea-party, when he was disappointed at finding her out. Then hurrying

back to 29 Arundel Street, to which most of these notes were sent by Mrs. Shelley, he cut out of her invitation the almost illegible words, to show her how his mistake occurred, and sent them with this apology:—

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—I do not know when I have been more mortified than at the impression which my mistake in the day must have given you of me. Do you remember what my note said about business which would call me away? And nobody ever mentions having business on Sunday. This will convince you it was an honest blunder: but you cannot require any asseverations on the subject; you do not think so meanly of me as to suppose the omission could have been intentional.

I hurried back here, where I am lodging for a few days, certain of finding my acquittal in a mistake of yours; but to my infinite horror, after I knew you meant *Sun*day (a riddle is always so easy when we explain it) I perceived Sunday was the word. But who would ever have taken what you have written for Sunday, unless its explanation had been previously enforced by a walk from the Strand to Kentish Town? Here is the word. [A blank in original.] The equivocal letters

are M and O, and here, too, are your M's and O's—to show that a clearer head than mine might have been perplexed.

No other days *could* have done me this ill turn. Is there anything out of the common way involved in our meeting that such extraordinary influences should conspire to prevent it? There could have been no such misconception of Saturday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, if ever so carelessly written. These are plain, John-Bull-looking days, not to be shaken out of their places by a starved O or an irregular S or M. But Monday and Sunday seem made for a puzzle—the only two days which could come together to create a new impediment have done so, to mock my hopes.

Once assured I may hope your forgiveness, I shall take care to *make* an opportunity for it to be conferred. I am, &c., J. H. P.

On the following Wednesday evening Mrs. Shelley replied:—

My dear Sir,—If I had been at home on Monday evening we would have mocked the unkind god who introduced such confusion into my ill-formed pot-hooks. It was ill done, indeed, after

causing me to form a thousand conjectures concerning your absence on Sunday, to lead you to the empty nest the day after. Will you tempt Fortune again? At least I can assure you that you will not find me from home in the morning, though I am just now so implicated as not to be able to fix any evening but of so distant a date that I hope that your kindness and my good genius will permit us to meet in the interim. Will you walk over Saturday or Sunday, or any other that may be most convenient to you? when it will give me sincere pleasure to find that neither the mistakes of spoken or written embassies can make good long their evil influence.

I am, my dear Sir, yours faithfully,

MARY SHELLEY

You talk of "a walk from the Strand," and mention being *here* for a few days; but, as this *here* is not geographically described, I venture still to address you as before.

On Friday morning Mrs. Shelley wrote again as follows:—

My dear Sir,—I was excessively annoyed to find that you had called fruitlessly yesterday. I had calculated that you would not receive my

note in time for a visit, and so did not include Thursday "in the bond."

Will you drink tea with me to-morrow? as a cold of Percy's will detain me at home from my expected engagement.

If you are in the Strand you will find stages in James Street, Covent Garden, every hour; if in Lancaster Street, attain the turnpike at Battle Bridge at ten minutes exactly after any hour being struck, and soon one of our vehicles will pass, which on being directed will set you down at my door.

You see how diligently I try to repair an inconsequence which must not make you think me unpunctual,—which I am not, and believe me, dear Sir, Very truly yours, M. SHELLEY

It is very evident that these notes were written in 1824, and after October 17; on that day Moore, the poet, breakfasted with Kenney and Mrs. Shelley and Miss Holcroft, and sung to the ladies; after which, says Moore in his Diary, "All walked together to Stuart Newton's, where we found Irving."* It would seem, then, that Mrs. Shelley saw Payne's "American Friend" before 1825, and after their meeting (if they did meet) in

*Washington Irving.

Paris. But in January, 1825, she wrote to Miss Curren:—

You may imagine that I see few people, so far from the centre of bustling London; but in truth I found that even in Town, poor, undinner-giving as I was, I could not dream of society. I live at Kentish Town very quietly, going once a week to the Strand. My chief dependence for Society is Mrs. Williams, who lives at Mortimer Terrace, no great distance. As to theatres, etc., how can a "lone woman" think of such things?

It must therefore have been after January that she began to receive "orders" and passes to the best London theatres, with which Payne so long and so generously supplied her and Mrs. Williams. But in April, 1825, when Lamb obtained his discharge from drudgery at the India House, the theatre-going had apparently begun, and Payne was fast falling in love with Mrs. Shelley. Also, Cooper's Boston novel, *Lionel Lincoln*, had then come out, and Payne had been discussing our American novelist with Mrs. Shelley, who had seen only one of the three volumes. Payne now sends her the other two, with a long letter, following a conversation at Kentish Town, of which

he thus wrote to Irving at the time of sending him the correspondence:—

The substance of the conversation here alluded to was the situation in which Mrs. Shelley and her father's family stood. She found herself excluded from the world by her devotedness to Mrs. Williams, whose history she explained. They were united by a common calamity; their husbands were drowned together, and Mrs. Williams's attentions had kept Mrs. Shelley alive. She was now determined, if she must give up her friend or the world, to make her election against the world. She also explained herself about her father, and her own devotion to the memory of her husband.

J. H. P.

Just why her devotion to Jane Williams should exclude Mrs. Shelley from society does not appear. Her father's pecuniary difficulties and the character of Mrs. Godwin and Jane Clairmont were more likely to have that effect. But Payne accepted the conversation at its apparent value, and, being in love, wrote the following exuberant letter, which contains some interesting comment on American society at that time:—

My dear Mrs. S.,—I send the remaining volumes of Cooper's last novel, which I only detained to finish reading, and hope they will arrive before you are ready for them. The early part of the work pleases me, because it reminds me of places I was familiar with when a boy, and gives a very correct view of the first movements of one of the most disinterested struggles upon record. You can scarcely share my interest even in that part, and the rest may strike you as rather commonplace.*

If, as you say, Cooper cannot describe refined life, perhaps it is because it is scarcely to be seen in America. Society there is made up of farmers, mariners, merchants, and politicians. Among the latter are most of our fine gentlemen, who being obliged to accommodate themselves to the populace, and having no privileged class to keep them in mind of high manners, become habitually careless and abrupt, and by way of flattering for votes, sometimes a little *mobocratic*. But we have refined feelings. These Cooper describes very well, and these are no bad substitutes after all.

Do not think that I, like Miss Fanny Holcroft,

*Boston and its neighborhood are here referred to. The American Revolution was the disinterested struggle to which allusion is made.

am in a patronizing mood, if I say that your yesterday's conversations filled my mind so full of yourself, that my poor pillow had but a small portion of its due. A heroine in love and friendship and duty to a parent,—and to the two former almost a martyr, is to me a being so beyond all others, that, even though her qualities are certainly "images" of what is promised in "heaven above," I can kneel down and worship them without dreading the visitation upon idolatry. The union of superior intellectual endowments with simplicity, fervour, and elevation and purity of character, is so rare, that where it does exist there can be no high treason against forms in welcoming so delightful a family with some enthusiasm. To any ordinary woman I should not dare to say this. It would certainly be interpreted to my disadvantage. But I think you would never have entered upon what related to yourself, with me, had you been utterly indifferent to my opinion, and where we resist the world, there is some satisfaction in knowing that our motives are appreciated by those for whom we have any, even the humblest, value. Be certain I feel the limit I am bound to set to the compliment of your unreserve, and that I am incapable of presuming upon it even in the wildest dreams. This would be the most

despicable vanity, and though, in talking for talking's sake, you have often found me falling into vapid egotism, I can assure you I am only just vain enough to think I have no vanity—certainly none on these points. May I not, then, praise you, and like you, and more, much more than like you, without a box on the ear, or frowns, or wonder that I should presume to do so, or be so impertinent as to tell you I do? I can only be convinced I may, by your honouring me with the preference of your commands, whenever there is anything in the world I can at any time or in any way do to show with how much truth I am

Yours, J. H. P.

In this analysis of American society in 1825, Payne showed himself not far out of the way. Our substitute for the English privileged class was then found in the wealthier Southern planters of Virginia, Carolina, and Kentucky, among whom Bronson Alcott used to say, he found those examples of "high manners" upon which he formed his distinguished bearing; which led Thomas Cholmondeley, after first meeting Alcott, to remark: "He has the manners *of a very great peer;*" the highest compliment an Englishman could pay on that subject.

To Payne's fervid yet prudent appeal, Mrs. Shelley replied:—

Kentish Town, *Saturday* morning.

My dear Sir,—Thank you for your kind attention in sending me the books, though, as far as I have yet gone, they grievously disappoint me. It is a melancholy consideration that the creator of *Lanton*, *Leather Stockings*, and my beloved *Long Tom*, should consent to put *Lionel Lincoln* forth to the world.

You are very good to say all that you do in your letter. You put too high a price upon what was the result of the instinct, as it were, of self-preservation, which led me to cultivate the only society which could alleviate almost unendurable sorrow. But while you disclaim vanity, you must not make me vain—or perhaps worse, egotistical. That is the worst part of a peculiar situation which by making you the subject of over attention to others creates an undue estimation of self in one's own mind. But I am resolved not to allow myself to be in my own way, but to talk and think of something less near at hand. Will you not allow me to preserve this laudable determination?

I was unable to go to the theatre yesterday

evening. But if *Virginius* should be acted and the thing practicable, I should like to see it. If I do not see you before, I will write concerning the arrangements for the opera. By the bye, a box would be preferable, wherever it might be, if it can be obtained.

Do not talk of frowns; you are good and kind, and deserve therefore nothing but kindness. But we must step lightly on the mosaic of circumstance; for, if we press too hard, the beauty and charm is defaced. The world is a hard taskmaster, and, talk as we will of independence, we are slaves. Adieu.

I am truly yours, MARY SHELLEY

Payne answered at once:—

My dear Mrs. S.,—Enclosed you will receive orders for the opera on Saturday. If you find yourself "in a bad box" it is always easy enough to go down into the pit. At the same time I send four admissions for Drury Lane to-morrow, as a comedy will be given with the pantomime, which, I suppose, will suit your good folks exactly. Macready is announced for *Virginius* on Friday, but Elliston says he does not think it will be performed. Whenever it is, four places will await you, or a private box.

As you seem a little uncertain in your plans upon these matters, I place the opportunity in your own hands, and you may use it, or not, as the whim strikes when the time comes—only, no sendings back. Tom* is going to Dover. If you like to have me with you, let me know by three o'clock on the appointed day; if more convenient to make up your party without me, do so. If I am to meet you at the Theatre, say. If I am to take the "Bartholomew Fair" myself, leave all the rest to me—I have managed something of the sort before.

I am thus particular, because perhaps we may not meet in the week. I am bound to the oar, as you will infer when I mention a contract to manufacture five hundred octavo pages between this and the twenty-fifth. Besides, I am reluctant to wear out my welcome, and would not cast myself between you and "the taskmaster." You are therefore safe from my persecution, excepting when you so far oblige me as to require my services, and then nothing shall stand in the way of your slightest wish; and you cannot do me a greater kindness than by giving me opportunities of showing you how much I am in earnest when I say so. Will you deny me that kindness? I

*Young Holcroft.

am very fortunate in one respect. I can have your company without oppressing you with mine. You are perpetually in my presence, and if I close my eyes you are still there, and if I cross my arms over them and try to wave you away, still you will not be gone. This madness of my own imagination flatters itself with the forlorn hope of a delightful vagueness in part of your note. From sheer perverseness, it sees imperfectly and calls it twilight, then plays fantastic gambols with the self-created obscurity. Amen! If the *fata morgana* WILL fling these pretty pictures over the heart, are we to shut our eyes and not rejoice in them? They are as beautiful as reality while they last, and when reality itself fades, what becomes of the difference? I would not have you check my delusion. If in looking above my path at the sweet paradise of vapour, I am doomed to fall into a pit, I must scramble out again, as well as I can and say, "it will all be the same a hundred years hence."

Pray do not talk of being made vain, or anything but what you are. You have too much good sense to be vain, even of your great value; for make the best we can of ourselves, the Gods and Goddesses are gone to live in Heaven. It is the distinction of a sterling mind never to see

how high it has got, but how much higher it may go. The most distant star we see, sees galaxies it cannot reach. You are perfectly estimable in every way—certainly more universally so than any one I have ever seen, and you would be doing wrong to yourself and to your chances of living for great purposes if you sacrificed any self-excitement to the dread of vanity. You may be trusted with yourself against the world. Your real character must not be sought for on the surface, and is inaccessible to any influences from without—excepting, perhaps, such as can make earthquakes. Am I not very civil to spoil paper to make you laugh? Yet, for all your smiling, I know very well what that part of your letter means which I pretended just now not to understand. If you tread lightly on the beautiful *mosaic* of my day dreams, still *you* do tread on it, and only leave me liberty to be grateful for the grace and gentleness of the pressure—and I am grateful—and care nothing about myself, so I may care for you, and tell you so without your being angry; which having done, here's an end to letter-writing, and the two-penny postman may go to sleep.

When are we to go to the Diorama?

Mrs. Shelley's reply to the foregoing:—

*Wednesday*, Kentish Town.

My dear Payne,—There seems to be an ambiguity about Friday, which makes it better that we should have nothing to do with it. I have seen *Virginius*, and it was on Mrs. Williams's account that I wished to go; but her health is delicate, and she is afraid of going out two evenings together.

The engagement of Saturday I consider fixed as fate, if you will permit it so to be; for we depend upon you as our escort. Will you *find yourself* between five and six on Saturday afternoon at Mrs. Cleveland's [Mrs. Williams's mother], 24 Alsop's Buildings, New Road, opposite to Baker Street—where you will find us, a coach, and everything prepared. Come early, because we are musical enough to wish to hear the overture, and moreover to have our choice of places in the pit.

Your octavo pages admonish me not to trespass upon your time, yet will you send me a line to say that you have received this? or I may fancy it pursuing you to Dover, until I hear that it is safely housed with yourself in Arundel Street.

Although you deprecate the subject, I must thank you for all "favours received," and I in-

clude kind thoughts as well as kind actions—although I truly know how entirely your imagination creates the admired as well as the admiration. But do not, I entreat you, frighten me by any more interpretations, although be sure I am and always shall be

Your sincere friend, MARY SHELLEY

Payne answered:—

My excellent Friend,—You will find me punctual. I was frightened at myself after I had sent that last letter, for though all true, yet it might as well have been kept to myself. It is considerate in you to take it in such good part, and more than considerate to think of reducing my extravagance by a diet of friendship. I hope I may some time or other be enabled to show I am not unworthy of the distinction.

With this you will receive the remaining volumes of Dallas.

Never mind my octavo pages, but let me hear from you whenever you think of anything I can do; and be certain it is impossible I should ever again frighten you with my dreams, after the eight and forty hours' ague I have myself suffered from apprehension of the punishment poor

little Joseph's brethren made him undergo for his. But you are too merciful to let me be *transported*.

Ever most sincerely yours, J. H. P.

We have now got along to May, 1825, and Pasta, the wonderful vocalist, whom Mrs. Shelley was specially desirous to hear, was in London. Hence this letter of Payne on that subject, but containing also an allusion to the state of his affections:—

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—Ebers is under some pledge to Mme. Pasta about orders on Saturdays; but I have secured Elliston's card for *three* persons, and have other applications out; so that if you require more, they will be ready, and you may arrange for six, which shall be sent to you wherever you like to appoint, and in good time. I would have enclosed the card, but it is at Stratford Place. Elliston dines with me to-day, and will probably bring it. As it was not for *Otello* you required the *six*, I am the less concerned at the delay. Whatever *escudero* [escort] you have, must represent the great lessee.

*Faustus* is to be given on Monday for the first time. Bishop has taken great pains with the music, and they all hope it will turn out a very

grand affair. All the singers are in it. I have the pleasure to enclose you four admissions and places, which are taken in the name of Russell.* It will gratify me to hear you have been present.

I almost envied your admiration of *William Tell*, and wished it had been mine, when I saw you laugh at the Abigail and weep at the trial shot. By the bye, now I am on the subject of admiration, let me relieve myself from one construction which a phrase about that same word in your last may bear. If you remember the phrase, pray exonerate me in your mind, from the painful charge it involves. I really am innocent of so much *fatuité*, and being ambitious of as much of your good opinion as you can spare without inconvenience to your conscience, I cannot help reverting to a subject which I meant to have buried with other children of my folly.

Believe me unalterably your friend.

Mrs. Shelley could not avail herself of the tickets so industriously obtained for Saturday, but on that morning replied as follows:—

*As Payne was in London privately, through fear of arrest by his English creditors on the old Saddlers Wells account, he did not take the tickets in his own name. Elliston, the manager, was "the great lessee."

My dear Payne,—The very little pretension I have to a character for consistency is so deservedly lost with you that I hardly dare to vindicate it on the present occasion. But indeed I said that I would go to anything but *Otello*, which I saw at Venice, and do not care about hearing again. Accordingly, when I saw *Otello* advertised to-day, I so engaged myself that it will be impossible for me to avail myself of Elliston's ticket. Is this sufficient defence? What can I say? Without a little encouragement I hardly venture to add that next Saturday, if *Tancredi* or *Romeo* or *Nina*, or anything but *Otello* is sung by Mme. Pasta, it would give me great pleasure to go,—or to *Cosi Fan Tutti*.

Are you, by the bye, tired of playing the *escudero* to us? It was hard work last time. But as we shall not again stay for the ballet, I hope we shall be able to manage it more conveniently to all parties. But do not disarrange yourself on our account. Nor can I, unfortunately, go to Drury Lane on Monday, since I expect a visitor from the country. I fear to offend by sending back the orders, and so shall use them, unless you wish for them; in which case I entreat you to send for them without any scruple.

You refer to a past note of mine,—which is

dismal; for I forget all I ever said in any note I ever wrote; and the sight of a letter which has been written and sent coming back to me again I fear more than a ghost. I *could* not accuse you of anything bordering on *fatuité*.

I looked out for you at Drury Lane, but could not find you. I was greatly interested and amused. The Author* and Actor are made for each other; the *forte* of both being tenderness and passion in domestic feelings.

Your note looks as if you remembered all the nonsense I talked usually with Jane and you and the silent man, in Lamb's garden; but, do you know? I am rather given to talk nonsense—and then only half of it was nonsense,—a veil, a make-believe, which means everything and nothing,—if this is intelligible.

I would ask you to call early next week, to arrange,—but I fear octavo pages; perhaps you will write.

I am yours ever, M. W. SHELLEY

Payne replied on a Wednesday in May, 1825,—probably either May 18 or 25,—thus:—

I intended to have seen you, my inestimable

* The "Author" was undoubtedly Payne himself,—a good playwright in London.—ED.

*friend*, but very particular engagements have taken up the whole of my time. There will be *four* admissions for you on Saturday, and more, if possible; but of this I will apprise you in time to make up your party. Use the orders, or give them away, whichever you find most agreeable.

Do not imagine I can be weary of anything you may require of me. I only wish you not to think yourself bound by politeness to ask me to be your escort, if you can supply my place more agreeably to yourself and others; and I say this honestly and without affectation.

I have no recollection of any particular conversation in Lamb's garden, but be certain of this,—I am determined never to remember anything about you which may not be remembered with pleasure. I know this is making a virtue of necessity, but there are few in the world worthy even of such a resolution, and I am persuaded *you* are one of the few. Whatever you may mean, I shall always be confident you mean as kindly towards me as you can, and more, too, than I have any right to claim. Pray say many kind things for me to Mrs. Williams.

Ever yours.

Mrs. Shelley's reply:—

*Wednesday.*

My dear Payne,—There is no opera on Satur-

day. I shall like to go to Drury Lane, and shall engage Mrs. Godwin to go with me if she is well enough,—perhaps you will meet us at the theatre. But I will write again when all is arranged. Remember for the opera I do not want to see Pasta in *Otello* or *Semiramide,* but in *Romeo* or *Tancredi* or *Nina,* &c., any night that they are represented. You are very good to annoy yourself for me in this way. Will you obtain for me two to four admissions to Covent Garden some night of Miss Foote's performance, as I wish to accommodate Mrs. Williams's mother? Thank you for W[ashington] I[rving]. Do not trouble your servant, which goes against my conscience, but write by the post. I write in haste and am

Yours ever, MARY SHELLEY

Kentish Town, *Thursday.*

Pasta advertises her benefit for next Thursday, and I and some friends have agreed to go; of course the tickets for such an expedition must be *purchased.* Will you have the goodness to buy four for me? But I should think that no time must be lost. I believe that if four box tickets are bought, all of the same box, one is admitted earlier, and has the chance of a better seat. Will you make inquiries about all this for me? I hope to see you at Drury Lane on Saturday, when you

can communicate progress. I need not say, if you can make it out, how pleased we shall be at your joining us. You see I take you at your word, and will not make any apology,—only thanking you very sincerely.

Yours very truly, MARY SHELLEY

It will be seen how completely the lady availed herself of Payne's devotion. He had probably sent her a new book of Irving's, as well as the admissions to Drury Lane, etc. He replied:—

I have done the best I could for you about places, the demand for which, they say, is quite unprecedented. I hope you will not blame me for not getting you a front row,—for it was impossible —nor for dividing the party, which could not be avoided. If you take the two corresponding sides of the partition, however, you will be together, and one pair can lean over and be sentimental. They have promised to reserve me a fifth place, where I shall try to come to you.

I enclose orders and places for Covent Garden on Tuesday, when Miss Foote plays.

To show I did not forget you about the opera, I enclose the box order which was sent to me in lieu of Saturday, for last night, but too late for you—especially as it was not one of your operas.

It came from the lady you so much admire—Madam Vestris.

I have made all the necessary inquiries about Pasta's benefit, but rather preferred waiting to see you before I took the tickets, as I know you are a little changeable in such matters. I really think box tickets will be a useless extravagance, when you can be better placed in the pit; and by going early, you will readily get in. Of this when I have the pleasure of seeing you.

Mrs. Shelley readily acceded to his suggestion:—

My dear Payne,—When I wrote yesterday I had not seen Mrs. Godwin, nor arranged for to-morrow, so excuse this supernumerary note. I have depended, as you kindly assured me I should have them, on four orders and places. If I have overstepped the mark let me know without delay; if not, it will be sufficient that you send them to Mrs. G., 195 Strand, in the course of to-morrow. I trust that you will do us the pleasure of joining us at the theatre; for I want to see you to thank you in person for your kindness, and moreover, I have something else to say about the production of a friend of mine.*

* Probably the play by Mrs. Williams.

*Friday* noon.

A note from my friends makes me add,—if you have not already bought the tickets for Thursday not to take any steps about them till I see you,—if you have, never mind; some of us will go at any rate. Adieu.

I am yours truly, and obliged, MARY SHELLEY

*Saturday.*

My dear Payne,—I shall be most happy to see you at the theatre this evening, though I hope to make such arrangements as to preclude your thinking it necessary to escort me, but I am not quite sure. I am extremely obliged to you for the trouble you take for me.

Ever yours, M. S.

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—Enclosed you have Pasta's *four* tickets. The number of the box makes me fear it is too near Heaven, and I do not like to trust such good company so close to the angels. But I am certain the best has been done, as places are in great demand. If you like to use all four, do so. I can get a ticket at the door as I go in. If not, you will reserve one for me.

Ever most sincerely yours, J. H. P.

The blue ribbon is Madam Pasta's *galanterie*, not mine.

*Monday*, [1825].

My dear Payne,—After due consideration, Mrs. Williams and I have concluded:—

To call in Arundel St. in a coach at half-past six. Without alighting, we will leave bonnets, &c., which your man Friday will bring to the opera at the right time; and we shall not stay for the ballet. If the hour I have mentioned be too early, let me know. This is far the best mode of proceeding, and will not take us at all out of our way.

Adieu—Au revoir!

Yours ever, M. W. S.

After Pasta's Benefit:—

*Friday* morning.

Amabilissimo Cavaliere,—Will you not think me impertinent if I request you to find for me, and let me know at your earliest convenience, the number of Lady Morgan's abode in Berner's Street?

Will you be so kind as to tell me what you paid for our tickets? that I may relieve my burthened conscience of a part of my debt to you; though the part I feel most your more than polite kindness, your goodness in annoying yourself so much for me, must still remain unpayable.

I have looked but not seen a handsome Spaniard looking out in Kentish Town for two *donzellas* whose adventures last night were certainly very ridiculous. My head aches this morning from the result, though neither ice nor softer flame occasions it, and as yet I am still faithful to W[ashington] I[rving]!!!

Yours, my dear Payne, most truly and obliged,

MARY SHELLEY

The following explanatory note on this letter is added by Payne:—

The allusion in the preceding note is to some laughing at the opera on this occasion about a Spaniard who caught the attention of the ladies in so marked a manner as to attract his. He followed them out. A remark of mine on the subject induced Mrs. S. to ask, "Is that in *Grandpapa?* It is worthy of him." *Grandpapa* had then just been damned. Hence my use of the signature, J. H. P.

*Saturday* morning.

My dear Mrs. S.,—Let me entreat you to take pity on my ignorance; spare me such overwhelmingly splendid beginnings of notes; what

is the other Italian phrase—the one you translated for me? If I knew it, it should embellish the top of this page and put your magnificence into the shade.

I have sent to a friend for Lady Morgan's address, and will let you know the moment I obtain it.

*My adored De Begnis* has *Romeo* for her benefit on Thursday, but it is a rule to repeat the benefit performances for the house, therefore you will have two chances of seeing them; which will be the more convenient to you—Thursday or Saturday? We will manage better next time, and you shall have no annoyances *but such as you may find agreeable.*

Think of your *elevated and intellectual* Pasta! She was swearing in vulgar French all the other evening whenever off the stage—frightening the servants for mere arrogance and ill temper. My *gentle* and innocent De Begnis *could* not have done that. No doubt you will say Pasta does many other things De Begnis *could* not. But you are opinionative.

Permit me to return my best acknowledgments for the compliments with which you are pleased to honor me for having obliged myself. If I should not have the pleasure of seeing you before the day

you select for Lamb's, pray apprise me by post. Believe me, I shall always be *more* than "inclined to accompany" you, just as "far" as you may be "inclined" to let me. So do not talk of inconvenience.

I am glad you return to Irving, for it is tantalizing to have one's heart in a state of miscellany. What I myself might have thought on Saturday, could I have presumed so far as to feel a personal interest in your fidelity—! Is *ice* a non-conductor? But if it is, how do you convey impressions?

With the tenderest paternal solicitude for your inexperience, believe me,

Your most affectionate—"GRANDPAPA"

A slight coldness is apparent here:—

Kentish Town, May 30th.

My dear Payne,—We prefer Saturday to Thursday,—if we are sure of *Romeo* for the latter day.

I confess that the greater part of your note is inexplicable to me. Pity what you call my inexperience, and write more intelligibly; it would seem that you fancy that you begin to know me better, when in fact you know me less than ever. It is foolish, however, to guess at an explanation painful to me, in what I own that I cannot understand.

You forget to answer a part of my note—the expense of the admissions. You promised on this occasion to be "an honest man and true," and I claim your promise with the greater eagerness, since it will save me the trouble of inquiring the prices of Eber.

I am yours ever and obliged, MARY SHELLEY

My dear Mrs. S.,—I have so little recollection of the note which has excited your displeasure, that it is impossible for me to enter upon a circumstantial defence. It is due to myself, however, to assure you that you wrong me if you suppose I am capable of "thought, word, or deed" which *ought* to make you angry. All I remember of what I wrote is, that some little *badinage* of yours was answered *by badinage;* and that there was some ridiculous play upon words, which, I apprehend, you have taken in a light I never dreamed of. At least, that is the only way in which I can account for your reproof.

The omission of an answer about the tickets was mere oversight, and proceeded from no want of delicacy. I think half a guinea each was the sum paid for them. The prices were lower than at Eber's, owing to their having been obtained through the intervention of a friend.

I *believe* I know you, and am *sure* that I value you thoroughly; and my having courted your society with a thorough conviction of the unequal terms under which it must be conferred might, I could have hoped, have protected me against constructions which, if painful to you, to me must be infinitely distressing. I have felt that there are cases, where, as the Irish say, "the reciprocity must be all on one side;" and this I ought never to have forgotten. For having grieved you I most sincerely ask your pardon.

I am ever, my dear Mrs. S.,

Sincerely and respectfully yours, J. H. P.

Kentish Town, May 31 [*Tuesday*].

A bad conscience, you know, my dear Payne, is proverbially susceptible, and the feeling that what passed last Saturday was not quite *en règle* made me captious. I accused myself, and so did not like to be accused (as I thought) by another. This explanation must be my apology for looking seriously upon badinage. I was annoyed at finding a picture turned into a man.

You say nothing of *Romeo*. Unless I hear from you to the contrary, Mrs. Williams and I will call in Arundel Street at half-past six on Saturday, though if there is to be a crush that will be too late,

unless as before, you get a ticket for a gallery box, and we can enter the pit from above stairs. The opera, you know, begins at seven on Saturday, so we shall not again steal your lawyer's wagon, but you can join us in our coach.

A part of your present note is very wrong—very wrong indeed—I can only say that I hold myself altogether the obliged person, and that I am

Your sincere friend, M. W. SHELLEY

*Friday* [June 3].

My dear Mrs. S.,—There has been a blunder about the opera. It is hard indeed that you should have lost any attainable gratification, and most vexatious to me that *I* should have been the cause. I was assured that *Romeo* would be repeated. Such is the rule, and this, I believe, a remarkable exception. But I should not wonder if there should be a feigned renewal of the engagement, and then we will make up for the disappointment. Will you go to-morrow, as it is? If I do not hear, I shall expect you.

I meant to have called at Bartholomew Place [Kentish Town] this week; but it has been a very busy one with me, and I trust so ceremonious a testimonial is not necessary to prove my grati-

tude for all your kindness. A thousand—thousand—thanks for your last note.

Ever yours, J. H. P.

We now have a date in this undated correspondence definitely fixed. The "blunder about the opera" was for Saturday, June 4, 1825. The following Sunday, June 5, Mrs. Shelley, going out and expecting a call from Payne, left for him the following note, which the maid failed to give him when he called:—

My dear Payne,—We were altogether unlucky last night, since our opera was changed, and we did not see you; and moreover beheld *Clari* cruelly murdered. Nothing ever was managed so ill, and parts—quite different from yours—in the worst possible taste. We quitted it on an incipient hiss which threatened damnation.

What divine weather! Kentish Town is odorous with hay. I live now. Shall you be here to-day? I hope not, since I go out; but I leave this in case of a call. We were unable to charm the eyes of your man Friday last night, being obliged to enter town another way.

Lamb, I fear, is not well at all. I hope soon to see you in some manner, and I am,

Yours ever truly, MARY SHELLEY

Not receiving this note, and missing his call, Payne wrote on Tuesday in much anxiety, thus:—

On Friday last, that ever unlucky day, I sent a note to you with some opera tickets. On Sunday I called upon you, but was not fortunate enough to find you at home. As the opera was changed, I presumed you would not go, and therefore did not go myself to play the scarecrow for you. But as the receipt of the note has not been acknowledged, I fear it may have miscarried or that you may be ill, or that,—in short, silence is always hard to be understood. I have frightened myself with so many uncomfortable conjectures that the worst truth would be a relief. Has any careless act or expression offended or vexed you? If it has, may I hope you will tell me so frankly? Perhaps it may appear that you have mistaken me or the expression. You will not quarrel with this solicitude?

Is it your wish to go to the opera when *Cosi Fan Tutti* comes out? Have you any desire to see Kean during his nights, which commence on Monday, and, if you have, in what characters? Believe me, my dear Mrs. Shelley,

Yours very sincerely, J. H. P.

Mrs. Shelley replied on Wednesday, June 8:—

My dear Payne,—I write in a desperate hurry, with the vilest of pens, which I have not time to mend. The enclosed was awaiting for you on Sunday, as I expected a call, but by mischance it was not given you. I am afraid that we shall hardly have courage to make another visit to that desperate coquette, the opera, unless it were for something very stupendous and very certain. We wish to see *Cosi Fan Tutti*, but do not wish to be disappointed; but before I decide I must consult my gentle oracle [Jane Williams]. Kean yes, truly,—fire and water for him—on the stage ; the characters? what will he play? *Sir Giles Overreach, Othello, Hamlet*,—of these I am sure,—perhaps *Richard III*. I do not wish to go Monday (June 13), but by that day will write to tell you, my very kind and obliging friend, when I will go.

This note I am ashamed of, and it is ashamed of me,—that is, the white paper is angry at being so streaked. But I am in a hurry,—so, with many thanks,

Yours truly, MARY SHELLEY

That same evening she returned to the subject, and wrote thus:—

I wrote you to-day in so great a hurry that I hardly know what I said. And I forgot to add that

I should be glad if you could without trouble get me four box admissions for Drury Lane on Friday for *William Tell.* I found the inhabitants of Gower Place* suffering under a visitation of painters; nor can I extract them from that scent to my hay-odorous Kentish Town until Sunday. Even for that day Mrs. Godwin had a scruple of conscience, having asked you to call on them that day. But I told her that, if you were disengaged, I did not doubt that you would not excessively repine at the prolongation of your walk; and dared undertake for you (if, as before said, that you were not otherwise engaged) that you would dine with them here that day. Will you come? We shall all be happy to see you. It is, I think, twenty years since we met. We dine at four.

Yours ever truly and obliged, MARY SHELLEY

Payne found it hard to procure admissions for *William Tell*, the very popular play of Sheridan Knowles, which Macready brought out in May, 1825, and closed his engagement with it, June 18; he therefore replied thus Friday morning:—

My dearest Friend,—I should have answered

* The Godwins had lately gone to live at 44 Gower Place, which was between Arundel Street and Kentish Town.

your kind notes instantly, but I waited to try for the admissions you desired. At the theatre they pretend none are given. I wrote to Macready, but have no reply. I should have made sure of them by other means, had I not relied upon Macready, but it is better your friends should not expect them, as now it is getting so late. I am the less concerned at the disappointment, as I presume you did not intend to go yourself. I had no idea you would have been at the opera.

You are always safe in promising for me, when the promise involves a chance of your society. I was about to have written to ask you whether you ever dined at Gower Place on Sundays.

If the tickets are for anybody in town, you had better (should you be at home) give my man Friday the address, and I will enclose them in your name, should they arrive in time to be forwarded before the play begins. I secured places the moment I got your note.

I cannot express to you how gratified I am to perceive in what good spirits this weather makes you write.

Ever most faithfully yours, J. H. P.

The dinner party seems to have come off, but at Gower Place,—for at this point Payne inserts

the record of a conversation in returning to Kentish Town from Godwin's house, in which he saw, for the first time, apparently, that Irving and not himself was the favored friend. At this time Irving was in Paris, but made visits, short or long, to his English friends. Payne was still troubled by his English creditors, and, in the note following this conversation, he tells Mrs. Shelley that it is "advisable I should be seen as little abroad as possible;" and he adds, "so pray ask no questions." His retreat to Paris in early August doubtless had some connection with the wish to escape the notice of his creditors.

Payne relates to Irving the subject of his conversation with Mrs. Shelley:—

There was a long conversation in walking home with Mrs. S. from Mr. Godwin's, in which she attempted fully but delicately to explain herself upon her sentiments with regard to our correspondence—plainly enough, but very indirectly. She said she felt herself so placed with the world that she never could expect its distinctions; and that the high feeling she entertained for the memory of her husband forbade the hope of any future connection, which should make the world indifferent to her—or rather the *English* world. Therefore

she was desirous of getting to Italy, and there passing the rest of her life. She added, "Having once tasted Nepenthe, what is there left for me to hope for?" The conversation then turned upon you [Irving]. She said you had interested her more than any one she had seen since she left Italy; that you were gentle and cordial, and that she longed for friendship with you. I rallied her a little upon the declaration, and at first she fired at my mentioning that she talked as if she were in love. Upon her reply, I answered: "What! Would you make a plaything of Mr. I[rving]?" And then the chat sank into mere commonplace. The scope of her remarks was that whenever she formed any alliance it must be with some one whose high character and mind should be worthy of him who had drawn her from obscurity, and that her selection must not dishonor his choice. She apologized for the remarks, and I told her I thought the better of her for all she had said, and that I understood its bearing thoroughly. She seemed considerably moved at the necessity she felt of giving pain by disclosing the truth.

By the bye, in this conversation I mentioned the letter I had just received from you upon Kemble's offer to me, which Mrs. S[helley] ex-

pressed a strong wish to see, and I promised she should see it.—J. H. P.

On Monday, June 20, in response to Payne's offer to obtain admissions for Kean's short engagement at Covent Garden, Mrs. Shelley wrote the following note:—

Kean's nights are limited to three, and *Othello* and *Richard III* are to make up two of these,—neither of which do I wish to see. But in recompense we are to have *Brutus* on Thursday; and my obedience to Papa's orders is rewarded by my having another opportunity of seeing a play I have long wished to see. Can you get orders and places for me on Thursday? and will you let me know as soon as you can?

I am yours ever and obliged, MARY W. SHELLEY

To this request Payne replied on Tuesday:—

I send you three admissions for Kean's benefit, and places for four. Retain the fourth ticket, as perhaps I may look in in course of the evening; but it will be late if I do, and I advise you to fill up the place with which it corresponds, as otherwise you may have some annoying neighbors. I

shall send to have the name changed on the box-list from mine to the one I have substituted on the memorandum.

Ever yours sincerely.

By Tuesday, June 28, the English weather, which had been unusually hot, although very agreeable to Mrs. Shelley,—always sighing for Italy—had changed to cold, so that her letter of that day—which appears further on—was whimsically dated by her, "By the thermometer, November." In the interval from her last note, Payne had obligingly read over a very poor play intended by Mrs. Williams for the stage, and on Sunday, June 26, he wrote Mrs. Shelley as follows:—

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—I have read your friend's play over again this morning, and return it to you. My own affairs prevented me from before giving it that attention which a request from you ought always to command.

The play would not succeed if acted. Of its literary merit you may think it impertinent in me to speak. This much I must say, however,—for it is agreeable to one's self to qualify disagreeable decisions,—whatever merit it has is literary.

Several passages remained upon my mind after I had glanced through the whole. This does not often happen in modern plays. For instance:—

> I'll bear it
> As flowers bear the loss of summer, flourish
> For a time with the strength that summer gave,
> Then wither on the stem.*

struck me as very poetical, and

> Love gives magnetic pressure to the palm,
> And flutters in the heart as caged there,
> Striving to beat his slender prison through;
> Then wearied breathes in sighs his passion forth;
> Now on the heaving breast his rage is seen,
> Now warms the cheek, now falters on the tongue,—
> *Oft from his half-closed crystal lattice peeps*
> *And hides again ere one can say he's there;*
> Thus, shunning, wooes, and so, in wooing, shuns, etc.,

considering the difficulty of writing upon the theme of everybody who can handle a pen, is less commonplace than usual; and better, if I recollect, than something of the same sort which has been greatly praised in *William Tell.*

There is great power in the following:

* This passage seems to have struck a sympathetic chord in Payne's experience.

By the way we passed
Many a festering corpse half hid 'mong weeds,
Whose unchewed stalks hung from their sinewless jaws
Juiceless and dead, denying sustenance,
And near their camp, o'er which the fatal birds
In circles wheeled, and screaming struck their prey,
Lay heaps from which the pale contagion steam'd.
Hard by were two whose semblance spoke them brothers;
Of one we asked (in whom the spark of life
Was quivering yet) what led him to such stern fate,
When stretching him upon his pallid friend,
With blackened tongue he licked his dew-dropped shield
And, staring on us, died.

This very passage, which is one of the most vigorous in the play, shows how little idea the author had of stage arrangement. It is given to a part which would necessarily devolve on one of the lowest people in the theatre.

There are numerous instances of that conciseness which the stage requires, and in which all the elder dramatists so much excel—such as "sorrow that weeps doth drown itself"—which is of the same cast as Shakespeare's description of paleness "dry sorrow drinks our blood."

What the author seems to consider as the fault of his play would have proved one of its great advantages, had its construction been more dram-

atic—I mean directness and simplicity of its dialogue. If English plays are not understood by English galleries, the boxes are never permitted to hear them.

Sismondi is the mere dupe of a hopeless passion and a mercenary priest. Even the congress of marble saints clattering down from their pedestals to settle the match between Sismondi and Adalita with Saint Pietro, could not have swayed even her superstitious mind unless her feelings had gone with her credulity. The whole affair of the Jew is an excrescence. The trick is unworthy of Saladin. Stage heroes are not expected to account for the ways in which they raise money. Mr. Rothschild would make but a sorry figure in a play about the battle of Waterloo.

Something might possibly (though I can scarcely see how) have been done with the story by making Saladin the lover. He was two or three days at Torello's, and had nothing to amuse him but falling in love. His vanity might readily convert the dress Torello's wife gives him into a billet-doux of encouragement. In the confusion of battle Torello might encounter Saladin, who, recognizing him, but unrecognized by him, would be very likely to attempt to evade the encounter, from a mingled feeling of magnanimity and grat-

itude; but, stung by the taunts of the crusader, Saladin might overthrow him, and then the affair of the dress and the supposed death, and the consequent visit of the enamoured soldan with a message from the husband left on the field for dead, would follow of course, and save the old abbot numberless lies and an infinite deal of preaching.

If Mrs. W. has any idea that a reconstruction of the play in this way, or any other, would be of use, it will afford me infinite pleasure to give any attention to the drudgery part of it she may think fit to require.

I have thrown these hints together only to convince you that I have not been negligent of your commission, and not to weary you with attempts at criticism upon a subject on which, as on any other, your own opinion is better than any you can receive from,

My dear Mrs. Shelley,

Yours truly, J. H. P.

In reply to the foregoing, Mrs. Shelley thanks Payne in behalf of Mrs. Williams—rather sarcastically—then proceeds to soften the tone of her letter, probably in view of her need of more theatre tickets and other favors:—

My dear Payne,—Mrs. Williams begs me to thank you for her for the attention you have paid to the drama. She has no idea of making the *radical* alterations that you suggest.

I am very sorry to have seen you in such ill spirits lately. Methinks I could give you a world of good advice, but I am so little didactic that I do not know how to set about it. And then I hope that it would not come too late, and that by that time you are gay and hopeful. I trust that you will see me before you leave town—if you do leave it, which I hope you will not, though this hope is, I fear, purely selfish on my part. You are good and kind to all except yourself. If you took to being bounteously, as you won't, courteous towards yourself, I think you would arrive at being, as all other objects of your kindness are, quite in good humour with and grateful for your own society.

You made me expect that *another letter** would have accompanied the book on Sunday. Is it indelicate in me to ask for this? I should not, of course, unless you had first said that you would be good enough to show it me. I hope to see you soon, and am,

Always your sincere friend, MARY SHELLEY

*From Irving.

With regard to Kean, the weather has been so bad that I have not been able to go to town to see the bills; but, as I suppose, he will play twice this week and no more. I should like to go both times, provided it be to *Sir Giles*, *Brutus*, *Hamlet*, or in fact to anything except *Richard III*, *Shylock*, or *Othello*. I shall be at my father's to-morrow evening; perhaps you can call there, or if not, you will, I dare say, be good enough to write to tell me by the earliest post,—what he acts on Thursday, and whether you can obtain places and orders for me for that night. If it be inconvenient to you to get four, two will suffice.

To this Payne replied with one of the best letters he ever wrote:—

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—Let me thank you for your kind note, which, though dated *November the 25th*, did not reach me till eleven o'clock, *the 29th*. Kean, I understand, only acts once this week after to-night; and that once in one of the plays you do not care to see. But I will watch the bills, and take care you do not lose his next representations of any of the characters you have named.

I did not send the letter, because I thought I might find others which would answer your wishes

quite as well, and which contained less about my petty affairs,* with which you have, in one or two instances, been somewhat disgusted, though you have never said so, and never will. The simple truth is, you have generally seen me under the influence of feelings too deeply possessed to allow me to talk about anything which would give me the trouble of thinking, and I remember all the trash to which I have made you listen with a sort of remorse at having, as it were, thus dragged down a fine mind to the worst of commonplace. But, no doubt, it would happen again, so let it rest. I did not think of these things when I mentioned the letter, which cannot strike you as it does me. I will find others for you, but I send this, lest circumstances should give a false colouring to its being withheld. To understand it, it is necessary you should know that Irving's advice has been of great service to me in all literary points upon which I have had opportunities of consulting him. Since chance threw me among pens, ink and paper, he and his elder brother are the only persons who have ever boldly and unhesitatingly encouraged me with the hopes of ultimate success and prosperity, should I decidedly

* Payne refers to a letter from Irving, which Mrs. Shelley wished to see.

relinquish every other ambition. My own expectations on this head are very different from those their kindness would inspire. Still it is a very agreeable thing to be impelled by the enthusiasm of such a mind, and to hear its praises, and know they are sincere. Now you can understand the letter. It places Irving high in my estimation, because I take my impressions of character entirely from feelings and actions. Here, as far as circumstances make it possible, I discover both. I am not sure you may not have expected something more chivalric and dazzling. At any rate, it cannot touch you so nearly as to justify what I taught you to expect from it. But here it is.

You are mistaken in the kind apprehension you express of my finding my own mind disagreeable society. On the contrary, I do not find any discomfort in it, but I know it is not a mind likely to be understood and still less so to be valued, and therefore more at home out of the world. It is better than I am, if you can understand the paradox, and it is only when events divert me from its first suggestions that it becomes wounded and perplexed, and shrinks back to its nest to regain its health and peace in solitude and silence. This is the brief history of its present disease. With you, once for all, I may be explicit and bury the

subject forever. A flash, as it were, and that at a time and place of which you can form no idea, gave me a thorough impression of all which I have since found confirmed of the beauty of your heart and intellect. I then knew nothing of you but what I had heard about you as a child, excepting what had been misrepresented, so that I had the satisfaction of taking up my impression entirely unswayed. I afterwards read all you have written, and heard much in your praise. I met you afterwards, and left you with a thorough determination not to trust myself to the danger of your acquaintance, with a wish, if you can understand such a wish, to pay you the same homage as I would the memory of one whom I had loved, but whose form, were it to appear, would only perplex me. This is the explanation of my long neighborship without a call, and of my wish to oblige you in every way possible without again meeting you. I *did* meet you again, and presumed too much on my courage, forgetting that the rein once given to feelings between the sexes, they are apt involuntarily to spurn the curb and gallop over the prescribed boundary. The error was perfectly gratuitous. I told you I knew my danger and could laugh at it. I am afraid now the laugh is not on my side.

The hypothetical case by which you, with so

much of that feeling and grace which are the great charms of your manners, endeavoured to convince me of what I knew well enough before, only lifts you still higher in my estimation. But all this is dangerous ground and better avoided. In this instance, as in nearly every one I have known, it is fitting I should return to my first decision. I have given way to an absurdity, and have only myself to blame. Indeed, I do not think my deep interest for you ought to permit me to wish that interest should be returned. Still I must *feel* while I *storiize* (excuse this word-making). It is therefore better I should not meet you till this strange fever is over; but it will grieve me if you suffer my resolution to prevent your enabling me to show you that it has nothing in it but what relates entirely to myself.

I am aware how ridiculous explanations of this nature appear to cool heads and hearts, and, in this instance, rendered remarkably so by real and conventional disparities. Hence, I can the better appreciate your Saturday's conversation. I must frankly add that you may imagine I have not lived upwards of thirty years without having had some opportunity of comparing your conduct with that of others, and I must say that I have never yet met an instance of so much frankness

and honest determination, the moment the truth became obvious, not to commit the feelings of the one party or the integrity of the other. The only exception I can name, differs in points so essential, that there is no injustice in not quoting it as one.

I am sure you will still allow me to be your friend in a corner, and to let me see your handwriting, whenever you can find any commission for me to execute, and that you will spare me anything beyond the mere matter of fact; as you are too kind not to speak kindly, and in this sort of delirium one cannot help perverting mere politeness, by fancying what is not till it becomes quite indifferent whether it is, or is not, if that time is ever good enough to arrive.

To return to the point at which our conversations began and have ended—Washington Irving—be assured I will act the hero in this business; and shall feel quite reconciled to the penalty to which my folly has condemned me, and which, I hope, I have firmness enough to make a light one, if my friendship should prove the stepping-stone to one in every way so much more gratifying and desirable.

Believe me, my dear Mrs. Shelley,

Ever sincerely your friend.

To this she replied the same day:—

By the thermometer—November.
By the calendar—June 29, Kentish Town.

My dear Payne,—I have read with great pleasure Irvine's* letter—with greater, because it dwells upon your circumstances. You are wrong in thinking that any details of this kind ever annoyed me. Once, I remember, a conversation about William's *visit* brought so forcibly to my mind scenes that took place now eleven years ago, that I become melancholy—for when will reflection on the happy, unfortunate past cease to have that effect on me? But I take a real interest in your affairs; and moreover I am too much of an authoress after all, not to listen with avidity to the detail of any of the forms of life and the human mind—were it new it would be the more greedily caught up—but I am familiar with difficulties and what you term petty cares.

Well, to leave my defence: W. I.'s letter pleases me greatly, as I said. I trust that you will attend to his advice and be inspirited by his admonitions. While you retire to "solitude and silence" to seek there "health and peace," I feel

* The way in which Mrs. Shelley usually spelled Irving's name in her letters.

sure that you will be more than ever awake to laudable ambition and exhilarating industry, and moreover a *little* economical; and then, without crossing the Atlantic in search of the dead, you may patch up a native country out of this queer England—or France. To the feelings of an Englishwoman who has never dreamt of crossing the Atlantic, America appears cut off from human intercourse; it cannot be the same to you, and therefore I may be in the wrong in my repugnance to your leaving us for it.

Your letter gives me pain, because you feel it, and because it seems to place a barrier to any future meeting. Thus it is ever one's hard fate either to be deserted and neglected, or, which turns out the same thing, to be liked too well, and so avoided. Few indeed have your kind generosity to offer, and I am sure sincerely offer, to do services to one thus circumstanced with you. Nor do I think that I do other than please you when I receive your offers not only with thanks, but with "acceptance bounteous," and will do as you bid me, and after these last words be laconic, till you greet me with the welcome news that I may show you all the kindness and friendship I have for you, without doing you an injury.

I shall be glad to see Irvine's letters, and the

handwriting, crabbed after reading your distinct syllables, will become as clear to me as Lord Byron's letterless scrawl. As to friendship with him—it cannot be—though everything I hear and know renders it more desirable. How can Irvine—surrounded by fashion, rank, and splendid friendships—pilot his pleasure bark from the gay press into this sober, sad, enshadowed nook?

But our conversations shall not end with W. I. if they began with him, which I do not remember. Why indeed should they end at all, but go on and grow sober as our years increase. Nor if you desire to renew them, let a long interval elapse; for I mean only to live ten years longer, and to have 37 engraved upon my tomb. In the meantime the *Sortes Virgilianae*, which I consulted to-day on the subject of my return to beloved Italy, promised that a magnificent dwelling should be prepared for me there, near the rocks which resound far with the dashing of the sea, beside the torrents black with bituminous whirlpools,—which means the neighbourhood of Naples, of course. Will you come and see me there? So I shall not see you Saturday, though I had fifty wise counsels to give, and sage axioms to deliver. Is it so? Friday I shall look at the bills and see whether I desire orders for Monday, and send you

word in measured phrase; yet be not too hard with me on this point, for the truth is, though I can rein my spoken words I find all the woman directs my written ones, and, the pen in my hand, I gallop over fence and ditch without pity for my reader—*ecce signum!*

But you have taken the affair in hand so sagely, and, methinks, I may say it without the charge of vanity, so disinterestedly, that I resign the rule to you, and will endeavour to conform to the laws you have enacted, which still permit me, I hope, to adhere to truth, and subscribe myself with deep interest in your welfare,

Your friend, MARY SHELLEY

Late in July, 1825, Payne, in response to a request from Mrs. Shelley to send her the *Life of Charles Brockden Brown*, an American novelist, of whom he had spoken to her, wrote:—

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—Pray do not imagine I have neglected your request about Brown's life. I have sent twice for it to Colburn's in vain, and went myself last evening, but the shop was shut before I got there. My man is dangerously ill,—another person whom I employ has not been here for two or three days and chance messengers

are always blundering. Pray let this explain the delay. As it may not be an object of very great importance, I must beg your patience for half a week longer, when you shall certainly have it. We are all dying here with intense heat. Does your love of bright days keep pace with the thermometer?

Ever truly yours, J. H. P.

A few days later:—

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—Here are three of the books you requested. The Biography is in a separate volume. I will get it for you in the course of the day. You will find a French translation, or rather amplification, of Wieland in the parcel.

The tickets and memorandum of places are enclosed. Thursday's play is changed, but the Coronation is really well worth seeing. The ceremony is as grand and impressive as a real coronation,—more so, no doubt, than *the* real one; quite a different thing from that at Drury Lane, though the introductory act is "heavy lightness." Do try and see it. If not on Thursday, whenever more convenient. Miss F. Holcroft has just left me. Your friend Kenney went to Versailles with his wife, where Ellen is still as ill as when she left

England. They all talk of coming over here to *settle*—the Kenneys to *settle!* Mrs. Harwood is on a visit to them at Versailles, where she remains till she goes to the titled branch of the family.

Ever yours, J. H. P.

Sunday, July 24, 1825.

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—I send you Brown's life. I saw it yesterday at Col. Aspinwall's and took unceremonious possession. Pray do not lend it to William [Godwin]. He is careless, and books come out of his hands slowly and with darkened countenances. But do not tell him I say so.

Ever yours, J. H. P.

Dear Payne,—In haste with a vile pen. I'll dispatch your note to William without delay. He is very abominable. He quarrelled with me really before I let him have *L*[*ionel*] *L*[*incoln*], and now—but do not fear I will send your note. I am to see you Thursday [July 28] at Gower Place, I believe, if you are good enough to go there.

Yours truly, MARY W. SHELLEY

Wednesday [July 27].

My dear Payne,—Will you let me have orders for four for Drury Lane for Friday? How does

this divine weather agree with you? I find it infinitely agreeable—too luxurious a pleasure, I allow to have always; for one can do little else than sit in perfect quiescence in the genial atmosphere surrounding one.

How goes the world with you? Except that this weather exhilarates me, I should be melancholy, for I have been annoyed.

Yours ever, MARY SHELLEY

If tickets are going a-begging, I should like six for Friday.

My dear Mrs. S.,—Drury Lane closes to-morrow. Will Haymarket orders do? Pray frankly let me know if there is anything I can do to reduce your annoyances. If there is, speak to me as freely as you would to your own heart. You may be sure of my zeal and of my silence, and of my deep regret if I cannot remove your discomfort, and delight if I can.

Most sincerely yours.

To the above Mrs. Shelley replied:—

Thursday [July 28].

I sincerely wish, my dear Payne, that you could physician my annoyances, for then I am sure

they would come to a speedy conclusion. Unfortunately it is not for myself, but others, that I am uncomfortable, and I feel that always more difficult to bear.

The Haymarket will do very well, only let it be for Saturday instead of Friday. The glory of the time has departed. How dreary these clouds are! and yet I suppose that I am *sola* in regretting the dear insufferable heat.

The orders I ask for are, as you may guess, for friends, but if we continue cool, I expect to be tempted to see Liston some of these days.

Yours ever, MARY SHELLEY

I am not in the slightest hurry for the life of Brown. A month hence will do.

*Thursday* [July 28], Kentish Town.

My dear Payne,—I am afraid that I shall not have the pleasure of seeing you to-night, as I expected, for Mrs. G. is again attacked by her painful complaint, which naturally makes her averse to the slightest exertion.

This day is perfect. The most faultless one I think we have had—not too warm I trust for any one. If *Don Giovanni* or *Figaro* should be acted on the last night of the opera, Jane and I would like to go, but not otherwise. If without any

inconvenience you can get me four or six orders for Saddlers Wells, I should like it, but do not stand, I entreat you, on any ceremony, but be quite sure that I shall consider your declining an indiscreet request as a mark of kindness.

Poor dear Brown—what a delightful person he seems to have been! As for my favourite I[rving], methinks our acquaintance proceeds at the rate of the Antediluvians, who, I have somewhere read, thought nothing of an interval of a year or two between a visit. Alack! I fear that at this rate, if ever the Church should make us one, it would be announced in the consolatory phrase that the Bride and Bridegroom's joint ages amounted to the discreet number of 145 and 3 months.

Am I ever to see you again? Hoping that I shall, I am eternally

Your very true friend, MARY W. SHELLEY

If you do send me the S. W. [Saddlers Wells] orders, pray let me have them or notice of them a day before their date.

July 29, 1825.

My dear Mrs. Shelley,—The enclosed letter from your "favourite Irving" will tell you why I leave England. I have promised to be off on

Monday [August 1], and sudden and perplexing arrangements keep me in a perpetual fret, and, what is worse (or best, perhaps), from telling you all this, instead of writing it. I mean to see you, if I can, before my departure, though I have a sort of despairing hope that I cannot. It would be painful to me—infinitely so—not to see you, if possible, but I shall not be sorry to have the impossibility to regret. I supped with one of my old Wells' proprietors last night and got undated orders, which are enclosed. When you wish to use them you have only to insert the date, but make sure beforehand that it is not a benefit night. The benefits begin about six weeks hence, I think. I will try to arrange for opera orders to be sent to you on the occasion you mention. But you shall hear from me again.

I scarcely know what I have written, for my room is full of talkers. But I cannot write half so kindly as I feel, and ever shall—. I will remember your impatience, and if antediluvian modes are to be revived, I will not be an accessory but do my best to promote customs more compatible with the term to which you have limited your stay in this only world where wedlock is tolerated.

Unalterably yours, J. H. P.

*Friday* [July 29].

Not to keep your messenger, my dear friend, I write even before I have read Irvine's letter. I trust that I shall see you, because I do not see why the visit should be so painful as you suppose, and truly hope that you will soon return to this country.

Now, my dear Payne, tho' I am a little fool, do not make me appear so in Rue Richelieu by repeating tales out of school—nor mention the Antediluvians. But I am not afraid; I am sure you love me well enough not to be accessory in making me appear ridiculous to one whom I like and esteem, though I am sure that the time and space between us will never be shortened. Perhaps it is that very certainty that makes me, female Quixote as I am, pay such homage to the unattainable Dulcinea in the Cueva de Montesinos, *i. e.*, Rue Richelieu.

But again be not a telltale. So God bless you. Give my love, of course Platonic, to I—.

I am yours ever, MARY W. SHELLEY

I will send Brown's life before Monday, and also I.'s letter.

Kentish Town, July 30, 1825.

Now that I have read Irvine's zealous and

friendly letter, permit me, my dear Payne, to congratulate you on this new arrangement, which appears to me to be very advantageous. It is melancholy to think, however, that you are going to leave us apparently for a long time,—the more so as, notwithstanding my earnest exertions, I am now with less expectation than ever of leaving this country. It would give me the greatest pleasure if Jane and I could make out a visit to Paris, to break in on the monotony of the much-dreaded northern winter, but I have not at this moment any hope of being able to arrange even this little wandering from my English prison.

*Quel che sara, sara.* Now during this divine weather I am so much happier than I have been for years that I will not by doleful prognostics dash my unaccustomed cheerfulness. If winter would never come, I could, with the aid of my darling Janey's sunshiny countenance, not look at a lamp post with unchristian desires.

So again you will dwell in Rue Richelieu—dine at the Café Français—walk in the Tuileries—carefully looking away from the spot where the diligence de Versailles puts up at; now and then take a walk to Rue de la Paix, and standing on the threshold of Hôtel Nelson be transfixed one

day with the bright vision of the swallows of Kentish Town. After all you will probably come over here now and then, to drive bargains with the London Theatres; in the meantime, pray write to me, and be assured that I take a lively interest in your affairs, and that the news of your prosperity will be a sunbeam even in the midst of the sleet and ice of the coming winter. Write me all kinds of gossip, for I own my failing. I delight in gossip concerning friends even as much as I am amused by it when it regards indifferent persons.

Ever yours, MARY W. SHELLEY

As your last act of office as *cavaliere serviente*, would you get me two Haymarket and two Lyceum admissions for any day after Monday next week?

*Tuesday* evening.

My dearest Friend,—I shall be on my way to Paris when you get this; I ought to have been so before, but annoyances detained me. I need not tell you how deep is my regret at leaving a place so much dearer to you than the one to which I am going, and then to know at the same time that I must quite be forgotten in your "favourite," and

only stray upon your memory now and then to supply a supernumerary laugh when you and your excellent friend have exhausted the review of your acquaintances, making the people below stairs at No. 6 Mortimer Terrace wonder what two lone, disconsolate ladies can find to be so merry about. Who will be your favoured escort now? Who will go with you to see plays and keep your patience from rusting for want of use? Who will love you with all his heart, and not quarrel with you or with himself when you tempt him to encourage a great disposition in you to love somebody else?

The admissions you desired are enclosed. I tried, but without success, to get the Lyceum ones undated, but it could not be. The opera, I fear, is impracticable. All the orders there are crowded out by money.

May I beg you to say everything kind to Mrs. Williams? I ought to have offered to take letters to her mother, but it is only within this hour (the chimes of midnight are this moment beginning) that I have determined on going by way of Calais. Your friend is kind and considerate, and will see that I could not send to her.

Will you think me troublesome if I ask you (when you have no further use for it) to send the

life of Brown to Col. Aspinwall,* American Consulate, No. 1 Bishopgate Church Yard, in the City?

My dearest friend, a thousand and a thousand wishes and prayers for your happiness.

God forever bless you. Most faithfully yours.

Payne did "come over here now and then" from Paris, as Mrs. Shelley had expected, and in view of one of these brief visits, eight weeks after her last letter she wrote this amusing one:—

Kentish Town, September 27th [1825].

My dear Payne,—I hear from William, who heard from your man Friday, *i. e.*, Lambert, that you are shortly expected in Town. And if this does not come too late, it comes to request you to do me a favour on your return. Louisa Holcroft has two or three portraits in keeping for me,—one of L. Hunt, one of my little lost William, and one, if it still exist, of Lord Byron. If it will not inconvenience you too much, will you give my love to Louisa, and ask her to consign these to your

*This was Col. Thomas Aspinwall of Brookline, who had lost an arm in the war with England, and was retained in his lucrative office by President Jackson on account of that loss.

care? and will you bring them for me to London? I suppose there will be a duty to pay—at least on Hunt's, though I cannot tell, as it is a chalk drawing and not a painting. That of my child is damaged, and they will therefore hardly require any on that, and that of L. B. is too small; but whatever is necessary I doubt not that you will do. Though if it should inconvenience you, do not scruple to decline the commission, quite sure that I shall not take ill your so doing.

Though I am most happy to hear of your return to *my beloved* country, yet I trust this does not arise from any disappointment in your views; probably you only come for a short period. You will find Mrs. Williams and myself *in statu quo;* and having no gentle cavalier to escort us, we have staid like good housewives at our several homes, only once having been to the Haymarket, and that on a moral principle,—to see *Quite Correct,*—for how could we answer it to our consciences not to take such an advantageous opportunity of improvement? Of course, throughout the exhibition we were "quite correct," so very correct were we. However, that is nothing to the purpose, but I assure you the moral upon us was not thrown away. By the bye, I went also with Mrs. Godwin to hear *Tavrace* [*Sic*]—a more dull

composition never was tolerated; but it was considered good taste to admire the music, some of which was tolerable. I never was more shocked than by Miss Paton's or rather Lady Williams's (for she is really married, they say) appearance. I never saw a woman so changed, and the faces she makes when singing put one in mind of a cat trying to swallow a bone. Her feet are the only prettinesses she has left, so I fixed my eyes on that while she feasted my ears—for her singing is good.

I have also been for ten days to Windsor, where I rambled to my old haunts—Windsor, Eton, &c., is the only spot of English ground for which I have an affection. We were delighted each morning, too, by hearing the King's band practise for an hour and a half—the finest band in the world perhaps, consisting of forty-four wind instruments, whose effect is so much finer than those scraping strings. In sacred pieces they rose to the majesty of an organ; in lighter airs their delicate execution seemed the work of fairy powers. The grand disappointment was that I could not obtain a sight of my liege Lord His Sacred Majesty. It was too provoking. I prepared my best curls and smiles and curtsey, and walked up each day to the castle with my companion, vainly. The servants in waiting began to know us, and one old

fat footman commiserated our fate mightily when we asked for the last time whether his Majesty was expected, and told him that it was our last chance. "I am quite sorry, ladies. I am sure His Majesty would have been glad to see you. He is always glad to see and be seen by ladies." What a flattering prospect! the while thus we fished, the object of our angling was seated calmly in a boat fishing for less fish on Virginia Water.

Enough nonsense, you will say, my dear Payne; I have pity on you and cease, especially as my paper warns me to add only that I am

Yours faithfully, MARY W. SHELLEY

Unlike most of this correspondence on her part, this letter, having to go through the post, is written on a full-size letter-sheet, directed without an envelope thus,—"A Monsieur J. Howard Payne, N. 80 Rue Richelieu, à Paris," and sealed in black wax with a carved seal, apparently Greek. The portrait of Hunt was, of course, that of her friend Leigh Hunt.

In all her correspondence with Payne, which extended over six years or more, there is hardly any single letter of Mrs. Shelley's so gay as this. Generally her tone is sad or annoyed, and one reason why she sought so persistently the dis-

traction of the theatre or the pleasure of hearing good music was because her spirits were so often depressed by real or imagined sorrows. Her own family were always in pecuniary difficulties; her relations with her father-in-law were never cordial, and often cold and annoying; and at the engagement and marriage of her dear friend Jane Williams to Shelley's unfaithful friend T. J. Hogg, Mrs. Shelley for some reason felt herself betrayed and injured. She made many new friends, and the care and company of her son Percy were much to her; but sadness, on the whole, was the prevailing note of her existence for years. She was attacked by smallpox, which injured her youthful beauty without disfiguring her; but she had some shyness at meeting her admirers after that affliction. She was sympathetic to her friends in their misfortunes, and wrote thus to Payne concerning his financial difficulties, from which he was some years in extricating himself:—

[No date, but probably 1826.]

Detestable as your annoyances are, my dear friend, I shall hail them as fortunate (when over) if they free you from the discomfort of avoiding them—forever. I shall be anxious, very anxious, to hear the result of your endeavors; pray let me know.

I should like to go to *Otello*, if you can manage orders; but do not tease yourself. Are you half laughing at me when you speak of my "elegant and distressing" note? I would willingly bid farewell to such elegance forever. Like all human things (unlike romantic sorrows) there is no finale to put an end at once to my annoyances. I look forward with fear and pain, but cannot see the remedy.

Let me hear concerning your affairs the moment you have news to communicate.

I should like to receive the *yes* or *no* of the tickets as soon as possible, for the arrangement of those who are to go with me.

Affectionately yours, M. S.

Before the break with Jane Williams, and probably in 1826, this note came:—

*Sunday*, Kentish Town.

My dear Payne,—I return the papers,—infamous trash! they are not worth looking at.

I and Jane think of going to the Lambs on Wednesday. Will you meet us there? If anything should prevent us, I will let you know.

Yours ever, M. S.

Later, in 1827, she wrote, still more sadly than usual:—

51 George St., *Thursday* evening.

Your heart, my most kind friend, is quick in making discoveries,—and it is beyond measure generous in its sympathies; the feeling is delicate that dictated your note, and I am truly sensible to all its demonstrations. Alas! mine are not fresh bad spirits; the same cause that occasioned me such dejection last summer is now operating in full force. It is little to tell you (tho' this is true) that I am much better to-night than yesterday,—for to-morrow,—I dread to-morrow. Some day I may tell you the cause of my sorrow, but I shrink from talking of it, and would fain bury it in oblivion. It is now approaching a crisis, and I expect to experience great agitation. I know not whether agitation is to others what it is to me; to me it is bodily torture. I writhe, and long for physical pain as an antidote,—to be sure, I now get that as a *surcroît;* for what was not the case a few years ago, my mind diseased diseases my luckless framework.

All this, dear Payne, will make you wonder, pity and love me. Would you could do me any good! for then I should get rid of a part of my evils; but it cannot be. I must bear alone.

I will write to you soon again to let you know how I am. Meanwhile you need not be jealous;

no man-person occasions my annoyance; but I believe I was born to run through every *key* of sorrow,—and my heart fails me both in retrospect and anticipation.

I will write very soon again. A thousand heartfelt thanks for your affectionate attentions.

Ever yours, M. S.

This might pass for the sigh of a despondent woman anxious to be consoled by affection, while disclaiming consolation. A little later in the same year we find this note written from the country (Arundel), where Mrs. Shelley was visiting:—

Arundel, 9th Sept. [1827].

What will you say, dear friend, that I take you at your word, and give you another commission? Did I not believe that you would forgive me readily,—and indeed not be angry at all,—I should not have the courage to ask. As it is, I am more than half ashamed. The matter is simply this:—

I understand that the Countess Guiccioli has sent me some papers thro' the principal servant of Mr. Lambton, which I have never received, and I want to write about them, but do not know where. Would you permit your Mercury to call

at Mr. Lambton's, 6 Cleveland Row, St. James, and to ask whether that gentleman is in town, and where he is,—send immediately, as he may any or every day return to the Continent. But let your person simply ask the above questions, and on no account mention my name. I have a very particular reason for this, and it would annoy me greatly if my name were mentioned.

A thousand apologies are due to you. I have not time for one,—only this,—come and receive them here,—come to the sweet woods of Arundel, and come and see her who is always

Yours truly and obliged, M. S.

It may be that the "papers" in question were those mentioned in a previous note; if so, the date of that should be 1827; for on this Arundel sheet is found the plain postmark of "Sep. 10, 1827." The seal here is black, and the device two Roman heads. On March 30, 1827, Mrs. Shelley was at Kentish Town, and had asked Payne, "How goes the world with you? The smile she put on for me is now exchanged for a frown; but I expect the smile to return ere long." July 24 the same year, she was leaving Kentish Town for Arundel, but the smile had not returned; so she writes Payne,—"Adieu for a few weeks. I hope to be in better

spirits when I see you again,—and that some good fortune will attend us both. Take care of yourself, and preserve for me the friendly kindness you have ever shown."

1828–29 Mrs. Shelley was at Park Cottage in Park Place, and in these years made the acquaintance of Anastasia Robinson, the "Perdita" of the Prince of Wales's youth, for whom Payne was asked to provide theatre admissions. The correspondence after 1825 lacks Payne's reply, but continued through 1831,—closing, as far as these notes show, in May of that year, when Paganini was making his triumphal career as violinist in London. On February 2, 1831, she wrote despondingly to Payne in reply to some invitation sent through him,—her age being then thirty-three:—

Somerset St., *Tuesday.*

My dear Payne,—Parties and this weather so little suit me that I have declined Mrs. Wood's invitation. Besides, I am not fond of going into crowded rooms where I shall not know a soul scarcely. I am grown old,—shy and lazy; and moreover am giving up parties as too expensive,—I being desperately poor.

Marshall having stated that he arranged the

*grand affair* on the strength of my note, I cannot help going shares with him. God send that we all laugh at such magnificences this time twelve-months! it is too much to be dwelling forever on the minutiæ of trash.

Yours ever, M. W. S.

The allusion to Marshall above must be to some scheme for alleviating Godwin's pecuniary situation, for which his daughter made herself in some way responsible. His future in old age was provided for by Earl Grey, who gave him a sinecure office in 1833. By that time Payne was in New York, trying hard to do something profitable for Godwin among the American booksellers. But in May, 1831, he was still in London, and to him Godwin's daughter applied for an admission on reasonable terms to Paganini's concerts:—

33 Somerset St., *Wednesday.*

My dear Payne,—Is it in your power to do me a pleasure? If so, I am sure you will; and it will be a *very* great one to me if you can. I am an enthusiastic admirer of Paganini, and wish excessively to go to hear him; but the *tariff* they put on the boxes renders this impossible. This tariff is arbitrary, because not half the boxes are

filled,—and still fewer at the stated price. Could you, through your acquaintance with Laporte, arrange that I should have a box at a moderate price, such as I have given at the beginning of the opera season,—a good box on the pit tier, or the ground tier, or the one above it (not higher),—on taking three tickets at half a guinea each? If you can manage this, I can't tell you how obliged I should be to you. Let me know speedily, yes or no.

Will you not let me see the *Frisandeau?*

Yours truly, M. W. SHELLEY

Here, as far as is known, the correspondence closed. The early letters, returned by Irving, remained in Payne's hands, and were increased in number by the letters of the five or six following years. When appointed Consul at Tunis in Tyler's administration, Payne carried them with him, and at his death there, in April, 1852, they were found among his papers by W. P. Chandler, his successor in the consulate. His own letters (which may not have been kept by Mrs. Shelley) are not mentioned by any of her biographers or those of Godwin her father, although he was a benefactor to both. It seems clear that, had Payne been a little more pressing in his suit, or

more fortunate in his affairs, Mrs. Shelley would have married him,—failing her dream of friendship or love with Washington Irving.

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